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Justice Department Fails to Respond to 43 out 45 Questions from Congress About Illegal Warrantless Wiretaps

The Department of Justice responded today to a Judiciary Committee inquiry into the NSA's illegal warrantless wiretapping program with evasive and unresponsive answers. Replying to a series of separate questions posed by Judiciary Committee Chairman James Sensenbrenner and Committee Democrats, Attorney General Alberto Gonzales provided no meaningful answers to even the most general and basic questions.

The Department provided vague and unresponsive answers to all but two of the 45 questions submitted by Democrats and a vast majority of questions submitted by Republicans. Congressman John Conyers had the following comments about the Justice Department's response:

"The Department of Justice continues to thumb its nose at the American people and their elected representatives. The evasiveness of the Department prevents Congress from exercising its constitutionally mandated oversight role and obstructs Congress's ability to draft meaningful legislation to provide guidelines for this activity. This need for oversight is especially glaring. In one of the few revealing answers, the Department suggests that communications between attorneys and clients or doctors and patients may be captured through warrantless wiretaps. Moreover, some of the Department's responses leave open the possibility that other surveillance programs exist with a scope far beyond this program."

The Department of Justice responses may be found at:
http://www.house.gov/judiciary_democrats/responses/dojnsamajresp32406.pdf and
http://www.house.gov/judiciary_democrats/responses/dojnsaminresp32406.pdf

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